Messianus

(d. October 456)

BRIEFING

Messianus (also Missianus) was a late Roman military officer active in 456 during the reign of the Western emperor Avitus. He is attested in the *Chronicle* of Hydatius and in the *Fasti Vindobonenses priores*, which record him as patricius and state that he was killed during Avitus's final defeat near Piacenza in October 456.

LIFE

Little else is known of Messianus beyond his brief role in Avitus's last campaign. Following the death of the *magister militum* Remistus earlier in 456, Avitus conferred on Messianus the rank of *patricius*, a title that in the mid-fifth century generally implied senior military authority. The brief tenure of Messianus is noted in the sequence of senior military officials during Avitus's last months, between the death of Remistus and the rise of Ricimer.

In October 456, Avitus attempted to retain the throne against the coalition formed by Majorian and Ricimer, who had secured the Senate's backing and the allegiance of the Italian field army. The opposing forces clashed near Piacenza on 17–18 October. Hydatius reports that Messianus was killed in the fighting, and his death is likewise noted in the *Consularia Italica*. Avitus was compelled shortly thereafter to assume the bishopric of Piacenza.

The death of Messianus comprised a rapid turnover in the senior military hierarchy during 456, after which Ricimer emerged as the Western Empire's dominant military figure.